

March 13, 2012

Public Health Committee
Connecticut State Legislature
Hartford, CT

Dear Sirs and Madams,

Thank you for the opportunity to write a letter in support of the efforts of the genetic counselors' application for determination of the scope of their practice in Connecticut. I would also like to support the ultimate goal of licensure for this important professional service.

I am the Director of the Division of Gynecologic Oncology at The Hospital of Central CT. In this capacity, I refer many patients for genetic counseling. There are many components to this service, including molecular genetic testing, patient education, and family counseling. This service is an extremely important part of the patients' preparation for surgical decision making. It is also a great assistance for the patients and their families in the planning of programs for cancer surveillance. A strong counseling program is a vital protection for our citizens, and it empowers them to make their own best decisions.

Currently, the three largest public hospitals in the Hartford region are all working together to provide a single counseling program for all adult cancer patients seeking this service. This program employs two full time genetic counselors, and consults approximately 60 patients per month. Uniformly, the oncology specialists at all three hospitals (Hartford, St. Francis, and Hospital of Central CT) have agreed that this is a vital service which is necessary to help these patients understand their risks and be better informed of the consequences of their decisions. Correctly, our area practitioners have urged that patients receive this counseling prior to making decisions about their surgeries or screening patterns. The physician of record remains actively involved in the process; but the program is necessarily multi-disciplinary; and includes molecular scientists, pathologists, radiologists, oncologists, surgeons, and genetic counselors. I am sure that the design of Raised Bill 370 is only to be sure that the physicians remain involved in the process, but we must be careful that the language of the bill doesn't interfere with the vital and constructive elements of the multi-disciplinary counseling services.

I believe that it is our common goal to ensure that the citizens of Connecticut have easy access to the highest standards of professional genetic counseling. Ultimately, this can be best assured by the clear establishment of an agreed set of qualifications, and by the maintenance of the highest standards in organizing this service. This was our motivation when the three area hospitals agreed to work together to create this program. At every

point, we have endeavored to be guided by national standards, and peer reviewed policies. We thank you for your help in promoting state licensure for this professional service.

Sincerely, yours,

James S. Hoffman, MD
Director, Division of Gynecologic Oncology
The Hospital of Central CT